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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Special assistance for the economic recovery and reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General**

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 54/96 B, of 22 December 1999, the present report describes the financial and material assistance provided by the United Nations system to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its economic recovery and reconstruction process.

II. General context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

2. The area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is 2,345,000 square kilometres, making it the third largest country in all Africa. It shares borders with nine other countries: the Republic of the Congo to the north-west, the Central African Republic to the north, the Sudan to the north-east, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania to the east, Zambia to the south-east and Angola to the south-west.

3. The population of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, growing as it is at an average rate of 3.1 per cent annually, must have reached over 49 million in 1998 and is likely to increase to over 50 million by the year 2000 and to over 80 million by 2015. It is very unevenly scattered over the national territory and, by 1975, close to 30 per cent of the population lived in urban areas. There are some 10 cities with between 100,000 and 600,000 inhabitants while the capital, Kinshasa, accounts for approximately 5 million of the country's 15 million city dwellers.

4. For more than four years the country has been experiencing a major crisis due to a succession of wars; the first, the so-called war of liberation, started in 1996 in the eastern part of the country and put an end to the Mobutu regime in May 1997. Just over a year later, on 2 August 1998, another war broke out, again in the eastern part of the country; its main goal was to establish a new political order in Kinshasa. This second war proved to be deadlier and more destructive than the first and resulted in the de facto partition of the country.

* A/55/150 and Corr.1 and 2.
** The footnote requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/248 was not included in the present submission.

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5. This new war, which continues even today, interrupted the process of democratization which had begun to show signs of reviving as a result of the change of political regime in May 1997 and has resulted in the de facto partition of the country into separate administrative poles. The protagonists in this war are the country's neighbours to the east — Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda — in a loose alliance with rebels now divided into three different and rival factions, and the Congolese Government supported, at its request, by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, member countries of the Southern African Development Community.

6. While the war has been going on, there have been several attempts to reorganize the political space in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, although against a background of disagreement. On 29 January 1999, the President of the Republic signed two Decree-Laws on the organization and operation of political parties and associations and the regulation of non-profit organizations and public utility services. He also initiated the process for the establishment of a constituent and legislative assembly; the latter met for the first time on 17 August 2000. The Government also set up people's power committees which are presented not only as grass-roots organizations but also as an institution of the republic and therefore on the Government payroll. The committees are being strongly and publicly challenged by a significant minority of political actors who fear that this may be a roundabout way of going back to a one-party system.

7. There have been several attempts to bring the belligerents to the negotiating table in order to put an end to the war but they have been unsuccessful. At the initiative of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), they did, however, sign a ceasefire agreement in Lusaka, on 10 July 1999. The agreement was accompanied by a procedure for the peaceful settlement of the conflict and for the restoration of peace. The procedure involves, inter alia, the sending of a neutral military observer mission under the auspices of the United Nations, the opening of inter-Congolese political negotiations leading to the establishment of a new institutional order, the sending of a United Nations interposition force and the orderly withdrawal of foreign forces. The Security Council, which authorized the deployment of military liaison officers starting in August 1999, established in resolution 1279 (1999) of 30 November 1999 the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

8. Unfortunately, little headway has been made with implementation of the above-mentioned agreement due, on the one hand, to the various difficulties created by the belligerents and even between allies — the most blatant being the confrontation that occurred between Ugandan and Rwandan troops in Kisangani from 5 to 10 June 2000 — and, on the other, to the rejection by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the facilitator designated for the inter-Congolese dialogue, Sir Ketumile Masire, former President of Botswana.

9. The current armed conflict, which extends over more than half the national territory, has thwarted most of the efforts to stabilize and revive the national economy, reversed the nation's reconstruction priorities and blocked all attempts by the new Government to restore structured international cooperation.

10. Despite its enormous potential and the favourable economic situation it enjoyed in the early 1960s, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now in a very difficult economic, financial and social situation. This vast territory which has immense natural (mineral, agricultural, forestry, energy and other) resources continues to have some of the lowest social indicators in the world and is classified among the poorest countries in the world. According to the *Human Development Report 2000*,[1] the Democratic Republic of the Congo ranks 152nd out of the 174 countries evaluated with a human development index value of 0.430, among the lowest in the world.

11. The sombre economic situation, which was very noticeable in 1999, persisted during the first half of 2000. The macroeconomic environment continues to be marked by the after-effects of the war, which has caused production to shrink sharply, and by government measures which have for the most part proved counter-productive. The country continues to experience galloping inflation and monetary instability and to run a fiscal deficit while resorting to advances from the central bank; its external debt remains very heavy and the social climate is extremely tense.

12. For 2000, the Government has seen fit to set itself goal of 1 per cent economic growth against a background of 3.2 per cent population growth. Although this goal is almost unattainable it is one of the bases of the macroeconomic framework

underpinning the State's budget estimates. The budget, which was adopted in June 2000, provides for a revenue of 821,120,000 United States dollars as against 1,110,000,000 dollars in expenditures, leaving a deficit of 287,140,000 dollars, which amounts to 25.9 per cent of overall expenditures.

13. These estimates contrast sharply with the way public finances have evolved since 1990. In 1998, revenue came to only $375.5 million as compared with estimates of $680.8 million, that is, 66.2 per cent of the target. For the financial year 1999, the budget performance report showed a large deficit which was financed entirely through direct advances from the central bank. As at 31 December 1999, Government revenue came to only $227,213,000 as against expenditures of $454,533,000.

III. Level of production

14. At the end of 1999, the central bank estimated the growth rate of the Congolese economy at -14 per cent as compared with -3.5 per cent in 1998. Given the continued fighting and the Government's apparent lack of clear economic options, as well as the delay in preparing a budget for 2000, the outlook for 2000 is not promising. Given the decline in production in certain sectors, as shown in the following table, it would seem that the Congolese economy is likely to continue its downward trend.

1999-2000	*Copper*	*Cobalt*	*Coffee*	*Diamonds*	*Natural wood*
November	361	270	1 095	1 795	1 083
December	265	238	2 746	1 596	1 297
January	157	48	1 030	2 084	178
February	109	71	698	1 154	750

Source: Central bank. Summary of statistical data, 14 April 2000, Kinshasa.

A. Inflation and exchange rate

15. Since the start of 1999, the Congolese economy has been characterized by general price level volatility. The strong inflationary trend observed during the first half of the year quickened during the second half and by December inflation had reached 48 per cent. Whereas during the first six months inflation averaged at 10.8 per cent, in the latter half of the year it averaged at 22.4 per cent.

16. During the first three months of 2000, the general price level rose on average by 13.1 per cent per month as compared with 3.1 per cent in 1999. As for the exchange rate, the difference between the black market rate and the official rate increased from 239 per cent in January to 333 per cent in March 2000. These developments reflect the inadequacy of the measures the Government has taken to influence the economic situation.

B. Monetary situation

17. Between December 1999 and March 2000, the money supply increased by 40 per cent. This is a result of the Government's systematic and massive use of advances from the central bank in an environment characterized by the absence, until June 2000, of a finance act for the current financial year.

C. External debt and official development assistance

18. The country's external debt is completely unsustainable. Between 1985 and 1998, it rose from $6.2 billion (93 per cent of GNP) to $13 billion (208.2 per cent of GNP) while debt servicing payments accounted for 24.8 per cent and 1.2 per cent of earnings from the export of goods and services. The flow of official development assistance (ODA) to the Democratic Republic of the Congo amounted to only $269.1 million in 1992, the year that structural cooperation was suspended, and it fell to $125.6 million in 1998 (respectively 3.3 per cent and 2 per cent of GNP for those years). In other words, the amount of ODA the country received in 1992 and 1998 was just 6.7 and 2.6 dollars per capita.

D. Social and humanitarian situation

19. The severe economic and social crisis affecting the Democratic Republic of the Congo has made it impossible to maintain and replace minimum economic and social infrastructure, resulting in a deterioration of the social and health situation of the population. This is reflected in:

(a) The low percentage of public expenditure on the social sector due to the termination of all bilateral cooperation (between 1992 and 1995, 0.7 per cent of the budget was allocated to health and 0.6 per cent to education);

(b) Life expectancy at birth of 51.2 years in 1998 (52.7 years for women and 49.6 years for men) as compared with 53 years in 1987. This decline is due to an increase in mortality: infant mortality rose from 127 to 137 per 1,000 live births, the under -5 mortality rose from 213 to 220 per 1,000 live births and maternal mortality rose from 1,870 to 2,000 per 100,000 live births. These unusually high rates indicate a serious human/demographic disaster overshadowed by the impact of the war. It is estimated that: (i) of the 2,360,000 to 2,500,000 babies born each year, over 203,000 die during their first week of life, over 323,000 die before their first birthday and over 518,000 die before their fifth birthday; (ii) between 47,000 and 50,000 women die every year in childbirth, including over 6,000 in Kinshasa; and (iii) the unusually high number of maternal deaths is due, in part, to illegal abortions that often result in death (30 per cent of girls under the age of 19, or roughly 700,000 girls aged between 12 and 19 years, have abortions);

(c) An adult literacy rate of 58.9 per cent (41 per cent for women and 71.3 per cent for men) in 1998, as compared with 62 per cent in 1985;

(d) The fact that a considerable proportion of the population does not have access to basic services: 41 per cent to health care; 58 per cent to safe drinking water; 82 per cent to health services;

(e) Continuing and unchecked population movements caused by the war and the considerable increase in the number of displaced people, especially in Ituri in Orientale province, where 150,000 people fled from the clashes that broke out between the Hema and Lendu ethnic groups from June to December 1999;

(f) The war has caused such displacements of the Congolese population that its current geographic distribution can no longer be used as a basis for reliable planning.

20. The foregoing indicates the enormity of the task at hand, the alarming social impact of the ongoing war as well as the tragic impact on the country's population groups of a number of political and economic measures. The ever-increasing challenges call first and foremost for the restoration of peace in order to permit the implementation of a policy conducive to economic recovery and job creation — the most important factor in reducing poverty; and the preparation and implementation of a national poverty alleviation plan for those population groups that cannot automatically benefit from a resumption of economic growth. The plan would take into account the concerns of the most vulnerable sectors of the population, including women, children, unemployed youth and persons infected with HIV/AIDS.

IV. Economic measures and options

21. The macroeconomic situation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been stagnating since 1990. In its report on the post-war reconstruction of the Congolese State and economy, the Government outlines its strategy for overcoming the crisis and notes that the socio-economic situation deteriorated in 1998 and worsened still further in 1999. None of the actions outlined in the report have been implemented, nor have any steps been taken to even develop them further.

22. The current political and military climate in the country is not conducive to the formulation or implementation of genuine national development strategies and plans. On the one hand, due to the partition of the country and the prevailing climate of insecurity, the Government has not been able to collect all the tax and customs revenues it can expect to collect in peacetime. It is therefore unable to honour most of its commitments, including in terms of the repayment of the public debt, coverage of the financial needs of the social sectors and Government counterpart funding of development projects. On the other hand, the Government has to address urgent, increasing defence needs directly related to the war.

23. In mid-1999, the unofficial exchange rate for the United States dollar was 10 Congolese francs as compared with the official rate of 4.5 Congolese francs. The Government took a series of economic measures to try to stabilize the foreign exchange market but this only fuelled further currency speculation. Among other things, those measures: (a) prohibited the possession of foreign currency by any individuals; (b) set prices for foodstuffs that are considered strategic; (c) closed all private foreign exchange bureaux and opened Central Bank foreign exchange bureaux at the Kinshasa border posts.

24. Since 22 January 2000, the interbank exchange rate has risen from 4.5 to 9 Congolese francs for 1 dollar. The price of fuel was not adjusted until 8 February when it jumped from 3 to 9 Congolese francs per litre. In the wake of these measures, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) organized a mission to Kinshasa to evaluate the results of various economic decisions taken by the Government, including in the area of monetary management. After concluding that those results were very poor, the Fund made several recommendations, including the establishment of a timetable for merging the official and unofficial exchange rates and granting authorization for the possession and use of United States dollars for commercial transactions.

25. In early March 2000, free currency areas were established in order to implement the new foreign exchange provisions liberalizing the possession and use of foreign currency, especially in the mining areas and airports, for export and import transactions and for other interbank transactions.

26. Some major events during 1999 and 2000 had significant consequences on the socio-economic situation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They included the setting and maintenance of the official exchange rate at levels well below the unofficial rate and restrictions on the use of foreign currency. Following the visit to the country last February of the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, who had been sent by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Government granted the United Nations agencies a preferential exchange rate of 22.5 Congolese francs for 1 dollar (a rate used for the year 2000 State budget). On 10 June 2000, it fixed a new interbank exchange rate of 23.5 Congolese francs to 1 dollar. Prices of petroleum products were immediately increased; the price of a litre of petrol rose from 9 to 25 Congolese francs.

27. It should be noted that the measures taken in June occurred during the visit to Kinshasa of a large World Bank delegation. The declared goal of the 15-member mission was to assess the prospects of formulating an interim World Bank assistance strategy for the Democratic Republic of the Congo which could be approved by the Bank's Executive Board in September 2000.

V. Situation and challenges relating to governance

28. In early 2000, President Kabila organized a meeting during which he announced his intention of quickly setting up a constituent and legislative Assembly consisting of 300 members. To that end, he established a 15-member preparatory committee to:

(a) Formulate procedures for implementing the provisions of the constitutional decree-law concerning the constituent and legislative Assembly;

(b) Define the eligibility criteria for parliamentary candidates and discuss a variety of questions relating to the establishment of the Assembly;

(c) Organize and supervise elections under the Ministry of the Interior.

29. It was not until 31 August 1999 that the remaining rebel factions signed the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, which had been signed on 10 July 1999 by the presidents of Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia, as well as by one of the rebel factions. In order to speed up its implementation, the Security Council held a series of special meetings on Africa from 24 to 31 January 2000. The main outcome thereof was the adoption, on 24 February, of Security Council resolution 1291 (2000), whereby the Council decided to:

(a) Extend the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) until 31 August 2000 and expand it up to 5,537 military personnel, including 500 observers, and appropriate civilian support staff;

(b) Establish, under the overall authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, a joint structure with the Joint Military Commission (JMC) that would ensure close coordination during the period of deployment of MONUC.

30. Since the role of MONUC is to ensure that peace is restored to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it should be used by the Congolese Government and other parties involved in the war in that country as a mechanism for the peaceful settlement of the conflict. Unfortunately, since the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement was signed, the parties involved in the war have been accusing each other of violating the ceasefire. The

most unstable front is in the north-west, where clashes between troops of the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo and troops allied to the Kinshasa Government have been routinely reported. In this unstable climate, which is a source of particular concern, there have, regrettably, been many reports of massacres of innocent people, destruction of economic and social infrastructure and plundering of natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the occupying armies that support the three rebel movements.

31. The three extremely violent and destructive clashes between the regular armies of Uganda and Rwanda in the country's third largest city, Kisangani, during which heavy weapons were used, are even more alarming. The clashes of June 2000 were the most devastating in terms of the number of innocent civilians killed, destruction of infrastructure (government buildings, hospitals, schools, private dwellings), humanitarian disaster (lack of health care and food, risk of epidemics) and the serious psychological impact on the population. The fighting went on for several days, preventing MONUC from implementing the decision that had just been taken to demilitarize the town, and preventing the humanitarian agencies from assisting the victims. As soon as hostilities ended, United Nations agencies began airlifting food and medicine to the beleaguered population of Kisangani from Kinshasa and the town of Goma in the east of the country.

32. On the initiative of the heads of the religious groups present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a national consultation was held from 29 February to 11 March 2000 with the main objective of clearing the way for the inter-Congolese political negotiations provided for in the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. At the end of the session, recommendations were made to the Government, the armed opposition, the peaceful opposition, the Congolese people and the international community. The following are the most important:

(a) *The Government* should liberalize the activities of political parties, dissolve such structures as the people's power committees, establish a transitional parliament, form a Government open to other political views and led by a prime minister, revise the Lusaka Agreement, taking into account that it overlook certain points;

(b) *The peaceful opposition* should encourage patriotism and cease turning to foreign powers for validation of their power and resolution of domestic problems;

(c) *The international community* should condemn the aggression against the Congolese people and fully and unconditionally respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

33. The final report and recommendations of the national consultation were submitted to the President of the Republic, who, in a formal address, expressed his disapproval for the most part.

34. Subsequently, the Government has done nothing but hinder any attempt to promote the holding of the inter-Congolese dialogue called for in the Lusaka Agreement. In particular, the Government has just rejected the facilitator designated by Organization of African Unity (OAU).

VI. Situation and challenges of sustainable economic and human development

35. The situation in the area of sustainable human development is worsening from year to year and the challenges are increasing as a result of the chronic instability which characterizes the political, economic, social and security environment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The analysis contained in last year's report remains valid. Its major points are reviewed below:

(a) With 125 million hectares of forest covering half its territory, the Democratic Republic of the Congo possesses 47 per cent of the African tropical forests and 6 per cent of the world's reserves. This wealth is being exploited to some extent, although the wildlife parks and flora in the eastern part of the country were severely damaged between 1994 and 1997 by the influx of refugees and displaced persons, which caused serious problems of erosion, deforestation and over-exploitation of natural resources. The situation has been aggravated by the conflict which has again been raging in the country since August 1998, and which followed the one that lasted from September 1996 to May 1997;

(b) The Democratic Republic of the Congo has endorsed the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and has adopted the Agenda 21 guidelines. It has ratified and signed a number of conventions on desertification, biodiversity, climate change, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Wetland Convention and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has already begun to formulate, with the support of United Nations agencies, strategies and plans of action to ensure the sustainable utilization and conservation of its resources;

(c) Since most donors have expressed the desire to carry out their future activities within the framework of a coherent programme of medium- and long-term reconstruction and socio-economic development, it will be necessary to start with immediate steps to strengthen the capacity of all the partners in national life (public institutions and civil society, including the private sector) in the areas of the formulation of development strategies and policies and monitoring of their execution.

VII. Cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations

36. The profound political and socio-economic crisis which erupted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1992 and which continues to this day, resulting in, among other things, the suspension of cooperation programmes between the Democratic Republic of Congo and most of its partners, has considerably reduced the possibilities of mobilizing resources for development activities. Therefore, taking into account the deterioration of social conditions and the difficulties in establishing the democratization process in the country (severe economic crisis, ethnic conflicts causing population displacement, influx of refugees from Rwanda, etc.), most partners have established humanitarian assistance programmes through non-governmental organizations.

37. Despite this situation, the United Nations agencies have continued their cooperation programmes while adapting them to the demands of the new context. Humanitarian activities have constituted a major part of the activities undertaken, but support to development activities has also continued. Aside from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which has been able to draw up a country programme, all the other development agencies are executing interim programmes. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continues to carry out its assistance programmes for refugees in the reception zones; these programmes have a positive impact on the local populations.

38. Within the framework of the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform programme, the agencies of the United Nations system have adopted the principle of synchronization, based on the Government's triennial programme, of their programming cycles, beginning in 2000. This synchronization has not been put into effect because of the ongoing crisis. Nevertheless, they have begun the formulation of a Common Country Assessment, which should be available in August 2000. As soon as the situation returns to normal, the process of formulating the United Nations Development Assistance Framework will begin.

39. Interventions by agencies of the United Nations system which have gone beyond emergency humanitarian assistance have covered the following areas:

(a) Health, including the fight against AIDS: World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP;

(b) Education: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR;

(c) Governance: UNDP, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNFPA;

(d) Management of development: UNDP, UNFPA, World Bank and IMF;

(e) Agriculture, rural development and environment: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNDP, World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS);

(f) Humanitarian: UNHCR, WFP UNDP, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

(OCHA), WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, ILO;

(g) Infrastructure: United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UNDP, UNOPS, UNICEF, UNHCR;

(h) Employment/labour: International Labour Organization (ILO), UNDP.

40. However, it must be noted that their efforts are seriously handicapped by certain decisions of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular the monetary measures to fix the exchange rate of the national currency. This particular measure has brought about major erosion of budgets allocated to cooperation programmes, thereby diminishing their impact in the field. The special rate of 22.5 Congolese francs to 1 dollar granted by the Government to the agencies is far from resolving the problem, considering that the unofficial rate is going up. This is even more true since that special rate is now lower than the interbank rate of 23.5 Congolese francs to the dollar.

41. Furthermore regrettably, official development assistance has been regrettably, drastically reduced, subsequent to the deteriorating relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its major development partners since the beginning of the 1990s. On this specific point, the conference of those partners (Meeting of Friends of the Congo) held at Brussels in December 1997, which examined with the Government the possibility of implementing the emergency programme of economic recovery and stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and resuming of structural cooperation, has not lived up to its promises. The unleashing of the fighting in August 1998 provided an additional motive for delaying the desired resumption.

42. Since certain partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo later stated that they intended to resume their cooperation programmes, the various sectoral programmes formulated with the financial and technical support of the specialized agencies will, when the time comes, serve as supporting documents for meetings to mobilize resources and/or for dialogues (advisory groups, round tables, sectoral and thematic consultations). For the moment, only the European Union and Belgium have officially confirmed their decision to resume unconditionally their structural cooperation with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

43. In order to relieve the suffering of the vulnerable masses, UNDP, FAO, ILO, WFP and UNICEF have conducted, coordinated and complementary activities targeting the vulnerable groups to find a way out of the crisis. These activities have been made particularly necessary by population displacements caused by the war and by the fragile economy, which have exacerbated the food security problems already existing in 1998.

44. Since July 1999, FAO has been implementing an emergency agricultural project with UNDP financing representing an emergency response to the food crisis in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi. In Kinshasa, the targeted beneficiaries of agricultural and livestock inputs include 18,000 households through the market gardening component, 2,000 households through the small animal husbandry component, 10,000 households for strengthening of food production in the areas around the capital, and 13,000 households through the seed propagation component. In Lubumbashi, the project targets 2,000 households (of whom 1,000 are families displaced by the war) for the market gardening component and 2,000 for the seed propagation component. Furthermore, with their food-for-work programme, WFP, FAO and UNDP have succeeded in bringing land on the outskirts of Kinshasa into cultivation so that over 3,000 households can grow rice. In collaboration with FAO, UNHCR provided farming tools and a variety of seeds to refugees and local residents in Bas-Congo province.

45. Under a memorandum of agreement signed between UNHCR and WFP, those two agencies have been fully involved in almost all programmes of assistance to refugees. In Bas-Congo and Bandundu provinces, major food assistance has been furnished to refugees from Angola and the Republic of the Congo who came to the Democratic Republic of the Congo between June 1998 and January 1999. UNHCR and UNICEF have collaborated on the health/nutrition and social components by distributing "baby kits" to refugee women who have just given birth and assisting, together with WFP, in supplying biscuits, corn-soya blend and medicines. They have also provided significant support in the Angolan refugee camps in Katanga province.

46. In support of vulnerable groups, ILO, with UNDP financing, has implemented a programme of micro-credit for the physically handicapped and other vulnerable groups in Kinshasa. Over 600 recipients of

this credit have begun micro-projects in handicrafts, animal husbandry, soap-making or processing of agricultural products. For its part, the contact group composed of certain embassies and specialized agencies (UNHCR, UNDP-OCHA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights), have made a great contribution to the protection of individuals at risk, some of whom have been allowed to leave the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo safely.

47. UNICEF contributed to the revitalization of the educational system by supporting 150 mixed primary schools, providing equipment and textbooks and training for faculty. It also implemented a project for the development of psycho-social skills. UNESCO, in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, renovated the library and obtained texts and materials for the Faculty of Law at the University of Kinshasa. Moreover, in the context of promoting a culture of peace, it held an International Literacy Day with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Family.

48. With UNDP financing and with WHO as the initiator and executing agency, two projects contributed to health care reform and implementation of the complete overhaul of the health care system, respectively. Under the UNDP/WHO project, 339 directors of health care zones have received training in management of primary health care and epidemiological monitoring.

49. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS support continued with the implementation of a letter of agreement with the Government, signed in 1996 and revised in 1999. Under this letter of agreement, the National AIDS Control Programme received support for, inter alia:

(a) The operation of the national structure and 11 provincial AIDS control structures, including logistical support and monitoring;

(b) The provision of inputs and, in particular, 20,000 tests and kits for surgeons and dentists.

50. Moreover, within the framework of the Strategic Planning and Programme Development Fund, funds were mobilized for the finalization and adoption of national policy documents (strategic national plan, three-year master plan and national policy plan). These documents were endorsed by the General Meeting on Health in December 1999.

51. With financing from UNDP, the United Nations Office for Project Services implemented a project to promote female leadership, which included the formulation of a national programme for the advancement of women, which has since been adopted by the Government. Also within the framework of this project, a number of training seminars for trainers were organized by female entrepreneurs, particularly in the processing of local agricultural products. Moreover, within the framework of the microcredit programme, ILO, with UNDP financing, extended loans, particularly to women, a group of whom organized an agricultural cooperative which is today a shining example of the success of poverty eradication activities.

52. UNDP supported the Government in the elaboration of its national programme for national capacity-building in economic management. This programme, which is very highly regarded by all donors, including the Bretton Woods institutions, covers all areas, inter alia: elaboration and dissemination of statistics, analyses and studies of underlying macroeconomic policies, programming, follow-up and evaluation of public expenditure, mobilization and coordination of external assistance, streamlining of the civil service administration and reform of the administration of justice. UNDP will coordinate its implementation.

53. With a view to supporting the preparation and elaboration of the first national human development report, a workshop was also organized by the Government and UNDP for officials of technical government ministries, university professors, high-level officials of financial institutions, agency heads in the United Nations system and leaders of non-governmental development organizations. A National Human Development Steering Committee, which will prepare the first national report on the global theme of governance, has been operational since early 2000.

54. With financial assistance from other agencies of the United Nations system and outside donors, the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights organized a training session on human rights documentation techniques designed for non-governmental human rights organizations. It sponsored and supported a judiciary assistance and legal

education project UNHCR, for its part, trained officials of the Ministry of the Interior in the management of emergency situations.

VIII. Humanitarian strategy of the United Nations

55. The United Nations has continually advocated a humanitarian strategy centred on actions that would tangibly strengthen the Lusaka peace process. To this end, stress has been laid on the following components: reintegration of displaced persons and refugees, social reintegration of demobilized troops, reopening of vital economic and trade routes, demobilization of child soldiers, support to initiatives for the cohabitation of populations in certain provinces and the promotion of human rights.

56. The agencies of the United Nations system carried out two consolidated Appeal exercises for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Presented in Geneva on 22 July and 24 November 1999, the results unfortunately fell short of what the humanitarian actors had hoped for:

(a) First half of 1999: of $17 million requested (excluding regional requests from WFP and UNHCR), less than $3.1 million was obtained (meaning that only 18 per cent of the request was granted);

(b) Second half of 1999: of $60 million requested, $5 million was received for assistance in areas other than food and refugees (equal to 21 per cent of this portion of the Appeal). Approximately 40 per cent of the food portion of the Appeal was covered. As for assistance to refugees, financing was gradually received to provide minimum assistance for severe emergencies triggered by the influx of refugees from Angola and the Republic of the Congo.

57. The direct humanitarian commitment of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was extended by a number of other initiatives, in particular:

(a) The secondment to Durba, in Orientale province in the occupied area, of Congolese epidemiologists and the delivery of medical material in the wake of the outbreak of cases of Marburg-type haemorrhagic fever (akin to Ebola) in this town;

(b) National vaccination days against poliomyelitis which gave rise to another direct flight across the conflict zones. Organized by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP, the mission included representatives of WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and was able to visit the occupied areas in the eastern part of the country. The next national vaccination days are scheduled for 7 to 9 July, 11 to 13 August and 15 to 17 September 2000;

(c) The direct repatriation by UNHCR of several hundred voluntary returnees from Mbuji-Mayi (Kasaï-Oriental), in the government-controlled zone, to Burundi. UNHCR relied on local non-governmental organizations to oversee certain refugee camps. These activities continued in 2000 with hundreds of other persons being voluntarily repatriated to Rwanda, in particular. The same holds true for the repatriation of nationals of the Republic of the Congo and Angolan refugees from the Cabinda enclave back to their region of origin. In the part of the country which is not controlled by the Government of Kinshasa, residual groups of Rwandan refugees from Goma also continue to be repatriated to Rwanda.

IX. Prospects for reconstruction

58. Last year, the report submitted to the General Assembly stressed that the current crisis should not obscure the opportunities for change available to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This warning is particularly relevant today, at a time when hope has been generated by the Congolese populations' desire to come to an agreement on the collective administration of their country's affairs.

59. Hence, the determination of the United Nations to ensure the rapid departure of the foreign armed forces from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is also a great source of hope for the return to a situation of lasting peace. In order to overcome the impending crisis, substantial assistance from the international community will have to accompany the country's reconstruction efforts, consistent with the priority themes outlined in the previous report (A/54/278), which must still be considered. Once again, they were:

Theme 1
Peace, security and reconciliation

60. It was recognized that the introduction of a framework of peace and reconciliation is a sine qua non for the creation of an environment conducive to the rehabilitation and recovery of the human development process. The activities to be undertaken in this area must necessarily reflect the political decision makers' will to strengthen the peace process. This dynamic should be supported by the provision of the appropriate material and technical resources to the various bodies established to maintain this process.

Theme 2
Preparing a stabilization, reconstruction and recovery strategy

61. Current support to the Government to enable it to prepare a development strategy which includes the dimensions of financial stabilization, reform, reconstruction and development should be pursued and strengthened. The solutions the Government should pursue remain unchanged from the previous years. They are:

(a) The participatory elaboration of strategies and a programme for economic stabilization and recovery and the assignment of a more realistic definition of priorities and improved role-sharing by the various actors;

(b) The creation of an environment conducive to attracting private-sector investments;

(c) Efforts to find an appropriate solution, in consultation with the main creditors, to the problem of the heavy external debt.

62. Already, the Government is making efforts to prepare the above-mentioned programme in order to facilitate its implementation as soon as the minimum conditions of peace and security have been established. This is reflected in the expanded dialogue with its main development partners, namely, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, IMF, the European Union, certain bilateral cooperation agencies, a number of agencies of the United Nations system in general and UNDP in particular. Since the final quarter of 1999, a number of important missions of these partners, led by high-level leaders, have been received in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Theme 3
Resumption of structural cooperation

63. As recommended by the previous report the Government launched discussions with IMF, the World Bank and its other main partners with a view to the effective resumption of structural cooperation with the international community. Initially, a mechanism will have to be agreed on for addressing the debt problem through the use of new facilities for countries emerging from an armed conflict within the framework of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. Such an arrangement would send a strong signal in favour of the resumption of macroeconomic dialogue and structural cooperation with the development partners.

Notes

[1] *Human Development Report 2000* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.III.B.8).